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of Old Saxon and Anglo-Saxon. Nor need we fear that students who are grounded in the elements of English, will not be naturally led from the study of the Saxon elements to the study of the Anglo-Saxon tongue.

From a scientific point of view it does not seem to be a good time now for special English scholars to discard this old set of names. They had better wait a little, till the science of language shall adopt some uniform systematic nomenclature for all languages and dialects.

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### IX.—*Some Irregular Verbs in Anglo-Saxon.*

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The oldest form of the past tense in the Teutonic languages springs from reduplication, a repetition of the root. This was used in the earliest Indo-European speech to express completed action. Weakened forms of it in Greek and Latin are familiar to all. Similar forms appear in Gothic; but the root and the syllable of reduplication gradually contract in the Teutonic tongues into one syllable. Thus the root *hald*, hold, at first repeated as *haldhald* to denote completed action, appears in Gothic as a past *haihald*, in O. H. German syncope and weakened as *hialt*, in Anglo-Saxon as *heold* whence English *held*. The past tense of all Anglo-Saxon verbs originates from an old reduplication when formed by a mere change of vowel.

Five conjugations distinguished by the different vowels of the past tense are produced in this way from the different root vowels.

There are other vowel changes in Anglo-Saxon words which are very different from these both in origin and history. Vowels are in this language very sensitive to the assimilating influence of the letters near them, especially of the letters following them. We conceive the later sounds in a word while speaking the earlier ones. The conception of the coming

sound tends to put the organs in position to utter it and we make a sound between the two.

Thus when a root *a* is followed by *i* in the next syllable, the intermediate *e* appears instead of *a*; root *swar* (swear) when followed by *i* in the present gives *swerie* by umlaut instead of *swarie*.

Several of the consonants also affect the vowel next them. The effort in producing the trills *l* and *r*, and the guttural *h*, causes a sympathetic movement, which produces a parasitic vowel sound; root *slah* (slay) gives *sleahe* by breaking. The nasals *m* and *n* prevent the operation of *a* on preceding *i* which would otherwise change it to *e*; root *nim* (take) has infinitive *niman* where root *stic* (stick) has *stecan*.

In the last Anglo-Saxon grammar from Germany, that of J. Loth, all these euphonic changes are ranked of the same value in establishing conjugation, as those which spring from reduplication. In this way the number of conjugations is run up to twenty-five, and the verb system is torn in shreds.

These euphonic changes have also obscured the conjugation of some of the weak verbs. This modern conjugation forms the past tense by composition with *dide* (did). Verbs of this class are derivatives in *-ia*, and in many words the *i* of the stem works umlaut in the present, while in the compounded past the root vowel remains unaltered, or is affected by some consonant assimilation or breaking. Thus root *tal* (tell) has the present *telie*, *telle*, but the past *tealde*, where the root *a* instead of *i*-umlaut, has breaking by *l*. So *selle* (sell), past *sealde*, and a dozen other verbs. Exactly similar is the origin of *sêcie*, *sêce* (seek), *sôhte* (sought) from root *sôc*, and other like forms, except that here there are consonant changes as well as umlaut; *sôc-de* changed to *sôcte* because the surd *c* assimilates the sonant *d*; then *sôcte* changes to *sôhte*, since when two mutes come together, one of them often becomes continuous for more easy utterance. The variation of the vowel in these words is thus seen to be a superficial matter, and compared with the old reduplicate changes it is quite modern and restricted in its range. It is not found in the Gothic.

The two classes of verbs just described, those with root *a* before *l*, and root *ô* before *c* have been long understood. Dr.

Morris in his "Historical Outlines of English Accidence" inserts indeed a note in which he speaks of the explanation as just made by Mr. Sweet in the Academy; which might mislead his readers to suppose it was there made for the first time.

But this process had before the publication of the writer's grammar been restricted by grammarians to these classes. Heyne (*Kurze Grammatik*, 2te Aufl. 1870, S. 205) says: Rückumlaut affects only the *a* and *o* of verbs whose stem ends in double *l* or *c*. So Helfenstein (*Comparative Grammar*, p. 483), Koch (i. §§ 42, 50), and others, after Grimm.

There are however three other classes of stems in which a similar process has gone on.

1. Roots in *a* before double *g*, written *cg*: as *lecgan* (lay), past *lægde* (laid); *secgan* (say), past *sægde* (said). Here *lecgan* is for *legian*, and the *a* of the past has its regular shifting or flattening to *æ*.

2. Roots in *a* before a nasal *nc*, *ng*: as *brengan* (bring), past *brohte*; *thencan* (think), past *thohte*, where the consonant changes are similar to those explained under *sôhte* above.

3. Roots in *u* whose umlaut is *y*: as *bycgan* (buy), past *bohte*; *hycgan* (mind), past *hogde*; *pyncan* (seem), past *puhte*; *wyrcan* (work), past *worhte*, where the *o* of the past is an effect of the *h*, as appears from the Gothic breaking *au* in these forms.

Dr. Morris follows the German authorities in classing these among anomalous verbs. Helfenstein also makes them anomalous, but strangely enough classes most of them with "*praeterito-praesentia*," because, he says, they take both the ablaut of the strong and the preterite suffix of the weak conjugation.

It is not strange that comparative grammars like Grimm's and Heyne's, should have these verbs among the anomalous. They are peculiar in the Gothic, where the dropping of the stem vowel, and the assimilation of consonants does not occur in other weak verbs; but in Anglo-Saxon these changes are regular, and the umlaut, which is not found in Gothic, constitutes their peculiarity and should not embarrass their classification.